

The Nokia and Samsung Brand Personality in China*

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to study and compare the brand personality of Nokia and Samsung in Chinese situation for brand building reference. This paper investigated Nokia and Samsung brand personality. Results demonstrated that Nokia brand personality has four dimensions (Sureness, Reliability, Agility, Peacefulness), and Samsung has three dimensions (Competence, Sophistication, Agility). The absence of Ruggedness supports the implication of many studies that Ruggedness is a culture-specific factor of United States in comparison with eastern country. Accessibility and availability of data are the main limitations for application in the future. This paper presents a new approach of optimal choice which used case study of Nokia and Samsung. The paper is aimed at HR and psychological people, especially those who deal with people and provides very useful advice for team management in enterprises.

Keywords

Brand Personality; Brand building; Factors; Mathematical Modeling

Introduction

As markets continue to mature and competition within industries grows fiercer, companies will not succeed purely on the basis of what products or services they offer (Keller & Richey, 2006). The manufacturers of many of the world's leading brands expend a great deal of effort putting personality into their brands because brand personality can be an important tool in differentiating a brand from its competition (Aaker, 1997), and strong and differentiated brands significantly enhance firm performance (Colucci, Montagut, & Lago, 2008; Madden, Fehle, & Fournier, 2006; Warlop, Ratneshwar, & van Osselaer, 2005). Brand personality has been defined as the set of human personality traits that are both applicable to and relevant to brands' (Azoulay & Kapferer, 2003).

Plummer (1984; 2000) argued that brand personality might be crucial in understanding brand choice. Indeed, at a time in which consumers consider product quality as a given and competitors can easily copy product characteristics, a strong brand identity and personality are invaluable to build brand equity (van Rekom, Jacobs, & Verlegh, 2006). Nokia brand and Samsung brand list among the three highest selling mobile phone brands, and the selling quantity of Nokia mobile phone is more than Samsung. The objective of the research is to study and compare the brand personality of Nokia and Samsung for brand building reference.

The work done by Markham (1972) was one of the earliest to introduce the idea of using a personality scale to study and compare a set of companies. One of the most systematic and influential studies about brand personality scale in recent years has been developed by Jennifer Aaker (1997). The basic objective of Jennifer Aaker's study was to develop a valid and reliable scale that could be used worldwide to measure the brand personality. By employing a rigorous set of procedures, she developed and evaluated a brand personality scale with 42 personality traits and five major personality dimensions, named Sincerity, Excitement, Competence, Sophistication, and Ruggedness.

The scale proposed by Jennifer Aaker (1997) was further expanded by Jennifer Aaker et al. (2001) through exploring many commercial brand personalities in Japan and Spain, including both utilitarian and symbolic functions. The results showed that a set of "brand personality" dimensions are common to both Japan and the United States (Sincerity, Excitement, Competence, and Sophistication), as well as culture-specific Japanese (Peacefulness) and American (Ruggedness) dimensions, and another set of brand personality dimensions are common to both Spain and the United States (Sincerity, Excitement, and

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Sophistication), plus non-shared Spanish (Passion) and American (Competence and Ruggedness) dimensions.

The cultural differences of brand personality were also studied by Sung and Tinkham (2005). They compared brand personality structures in United States and Korea, 6 common dimensions of brand personality and 2 factors unique to each culture were observed. The 2 culture-specific factors in Korea were Passive Likeableness and Ascendancy and the 2 unique factors (White Collar and Androgyny) that emerged in the U.S. sample suggested changing cultural values associated with occupational status and gender roles.

Thomas and Seker (2008) used the Jennifer Aaker's brand personality scale to measure the brand personality of Colgate brand in the Indian situation and explore the model validity of the scale. A validity check of the scale using Factor Analysis was carried out, which indicated that the number of dimensions of Brand Personality was 13 and that about 10 items of Jennifer Aaker's Brand Personality scale were not applicable in the Indian situation. Rojas-Méndez et al. (2004) also used the Jennifer Aaker's brand personality scale to study the Ford brand personality in Chile. The confirmatory factor analysis of the measurement model and the analysis of the structural model provided evidence that the 'ruggedness' dimension proposed by Jennifer Aaker (1997) was not reliable, nor was it valid in Chile situation. And a new scale formed by refining the other four dimensions. Besides, the study offered some marketing suggestions for the positioning of the Ford brand in Chile.

Method

Selection of Brand Personality Attributes

1) Overview

In the first stage of personality trait generation, a set of 86 candidate traits was created by eliminating redundant and conceptually inappropriate items from trait lists optioned from three sources: original qualitative research, Chinese brand personality scale (Shengbin Huang & Taihong Lu, 2003) and Western brand personality scale (David Aaker, 1996). In the second stage, this set of traits was reduced to a more manageable number (60 for studying Nokia, 55 for studying Samsung).

2) First stage.

By means of a free association task, subjects (n=47, 53.2% female) were asked to describe Nokia and

Samsung brands respectively in personality attributes "as if they were a person". The process yielded 41 unique traits. Second, 66 from Chinese brand personality scale (Shengbin Huang & Taihong Lu, 2003) and 78 translated items from Aaker's (1997) Western brand personality scale were added to the pool of traits. At last, 86 candidate personality traits were left by eliminating redundant words and excluding the items which did not closely relate to the conceptual definition employed ("the set of human personality traits that are both applicable to and relevant to brands"; Azoulay & Kapferer, 2003).

Second stage

Subjects (n=30, 50% female, 63.3% postgraduates, 36.7% undergraduates) rated how applicable the 86 first stage items to describe Nokia (or Samsung) if it were a person (five - point Likert scales; 1= not at all applicable, 5 = extremely applicable). The cutoff for the final list of personality traits was the average rating of 3.5, thereby leaving 60 personality traits for studying Nokia brand personality and 55 for studying Samsung's.

1) Participants.

710 undergraduate students from Ningxia University and Northern University for Nationalities in Yinchuan, China, were surveyed, and 703 individuals responded. Of those, 89 were excluded because of missing data (49) or the participants' reports of "have no knowledge about Nokia or Samsung at all" (40). As such, the final sample size was 614. The participants ranged in age from 18 to 30 (M = 21). 51.6% of the sample was female, 65.1% belongs to Han nationality, 63% was Nokia mobile phone user, and 21% was Samsung mobile phone user. In the analyses of identifying and confirming the brand personality constructs, the sample was split randomly into two independent samples. The first sample included 306 participants and was used to conduct EFA. The second sample included 308 participants and was used to conduct CFA.

2) Procedure.

Subjects received the following set of instructions in questionnaire:

If you are asked to think of Pepsi-Cola as if it were a person, you might think the person is very young, active and like doing sports and singing songs.

Now we would like you to think of Nokia (or Samsung)

brand as if it were a person, to what extent do you agree that the following attributes describe his/her personality?

Using a five-point Likert scale (1 = not at all descriptive, 5 = extremely descriptive), the subjects rated respectively their agreement extent to which the 60 personality traits describe Nokia and the 55 personality traits describe Samsung. Besides, the subjects were asked how much they learned about Nokia and Samsung respectively (1 = not at all, 2 = little, 3 = uncertain, 4 = a little, 5 = a lot).

Result

Nokia and Samsung Brand Personality Constructs

1) Exploratory Factor Analysis

Prior to conducting exploratory factor analysis, two indicators were examined to determine whether the first sample (n=306) was appropriate for such an analysis. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measures of sampling adequacy index were .935 for Nokia's (60 items) and .955 for Samsung's (55 items), and Bartlett's tests of sphericity were significant, $\chi^2(1770, N = 306) = 9767.302, p < .0001$ and $\chi^2(1485, N = 306) = 9672.309, p < .0001$, indicating that the sample and correlation matrix were appropriate for the analysis.

A principal components-analysis with varimax rotation

was performed on the 60 items for Nokia's. A four-factor solution was yielded according to the following criteria:

- (1) The eigenvalues of all factors left were greater than one;
- (2) shape of the scree plot;
- (3) meaningfulness of the dimensions;
- (4) at least forms per factor had loadings above .50;
- (5) stability of the solutions in separate principal components analysis with distinct sub-samples (e.g., males vs. females).

Another principal components-analysis with varimax rotation was performed on the 55 items for Samsung's, and a three-factor solution was yielded according to the same criteria.

In the four factors for Nokia's and three factors for Samsung's, all items that received the factor loading of less than .50 were dropped. As such, there were 27 items left for Nokia's and 23 left for Samsung's. The principal components-analysis with varimax rotation conducted with the 27 and 23 items respectively. The results were easily interpretable four-factor and three-factor solutions with high loadings and communalities for each of the traits (see Table 1 and Table 2). The resulting four and three factors explained 55.5% and 53.5% respectively of the variances.

TABLE 1 NOKIA BRAND PERSONALITY

Abbreviated English Translation	<i>Su</i>	<i>Re</i>	<i>Ag</i>	<i>Pe</i>	Communities	Mean	Deviation	Std.
Surefooted	.78	.22	.10	.09	.68	3.88	1.02	
Conscientious	.74	.29	.12	.13	.66	3.92	.99	
Diligent	.65	.12	.32	.11	.55	3.53	1.05	
Sincere	.63	.18	.21	.34	.58	3.74	1.00	
Loyal	.62	.21	.13	.30	.54	3.66	1.03	
Honest	.61	.16	.20	.37	.57	3.76	.98	
Admirable	.60	.34	.15	.16	.53	3.67	1.04	
Responsible	.57	.30	.12	.25	.48	3.93	1.02	
Brave advance	.56	.21	.29	.19	.47	3.74	.99	
Stable	.55	.46	.10	.16	.55	4.00	.937	
Simple	.46	.43	-.12	.19	.44	3.85	1.15	

Solid	.17	.75	.02	.16	.62	4.33	1.03
Influential	.15	.68	.27	-.02	.55	4.26	.90
Successful	.22	.65	.39	.05	.63	4.15	.92
Reliable	.30	.64	.05	.35	.62	4.20	.89
Rugged	.33	.61	.01	.07	.48	4.33	1.03
Strong	.33	.60	.06	.26	.54	4.04	1.00
Imaginative	-.02	.04	.74	.19	.58	3.23	1.027
Flexible	.09	.17	.69	.18	.55	3.31	1.03
Intelligent	.16	.13	.68	.10	.52	3.47	.98
Daring	.27	-.02	.68	.09	.54	3.43	1.09
Passional	.32	.09	.58	.29	.54	3.46	.99
Peaceful	.30	.01	.17	.73	.65	3.64	.98
Tidy	.26	.15	.17	.66	.56	3.74	.97
Friendly	.25	.29	.15	.61	.54	3.78	.93
Careful	.15	.19	.36	.56	.50	3.59	.98
Considerate	.14	.13	.44	.51	.48	3.50	.97

Note. Su = Sureness, Re = Reliability, Ex = Agility, Pe = Peacefulness

TABLE 2 SAMSUNG BRAND PERSONALITY

Abbreviated English Translation	Co	So	Ag	Communities	Mean	Std. Deviation
Reliable	.75	.23	.08	.62	3.62	.98
Efficient	.74	.17	.20	.61	3.72	.97
Competent	.66	.30	.15	.55	3.70	.96
Precise	.65	.09	.20	.46	3.42	.98
Brave advance	.64	.04	.32	.51	3.54	.95
Successful	.63	.36	.20	.57	3.70	.95
Professional	.63	.22	.08	.45	3.64	.95
With connotation	.61	.29	.07	.46	3.63	1.04
Diligent	.59	-.02	.44	.55	3.43	.93
Passional	.57	.19	.43	.54	3.56	.94
Careful	.56	.23	.31	.46	3.52	1.00
Stylish	.23	.74	.16	.62	3.77	1.02
Up-to-date	.18	.69	.28	.58	3.87	.97
Glaring	.06	.68	.24	.53	3.69	1.07
Unique	.25	.61	.34	.54	3.69	1.02
Charming	.31	.60	.24	.51	3.87	1.03

Influential	.52	.54	.10	.57	3.88	.93
Innovative	.37	.51	.37	.53	3.84	1.03
Flexible	.20	.28	.71	.63	3.60	.98
Daring	.23	.19	.68	.55	3.62	1.01
Versatile	.18	.21	.65	.50	3.54	1.00
Free	.27	.27	.63	.54	3.57	1.01
Cool	.07	.30	.58	.43	3.50	1.10

Note. Co = Competence, So = Sophistication, Ag = Agility

2) Confirmatory Factor Analysis.

CFA was conducted on the second sample (n=308) to validate the results of EFA by using Lisrel 8.70.

According to Table 3, both of the two models, the four-factor model of Nokia brand personality and the three-factor model of Samsung's, produced acceptable fits.

TABLE 3 GOODNESS-OF-FIT STATISTICS FOR THE MODELS (N = 308)

Model	χ^2	df	χ^2/df	RMSA	CFI	NNFI	GFI	AGFI
Model _N	702.14	318	2.21	0.061	0.97	0.97	0.86	0.83
Models	628.08	227	2.77	0.076	0.96	0.95	0.85	0.82

Note. Model_N = the four-factor model of Nokia brand personality, Models = the three-factor model of Samsung's

Reliability

To assess the internal consistency reliability of the factors, Cronbach's alpha was calculated for each of the factors. The four factors of the Nokia brand personality, Sureness, Reliability, Agility and Peacefulness, achieved alphas of .89, .84, .77, and .78 respectively; and the three factors of the Samsung's, Competence, Sophistication, Agility, got alphas of .89, .84, .76. All factors were deemed reliable because they met the minimum standard of reliability (Cronbach's alpha>.60; Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994).

Gerneral Discussion

The goal of the research is to study and compare the brand personality of Nokia and Samsung in Chinese situation for brand building reference. Rigorous selection of brand personality attributes and factor analysis show that Nokia brand personality has four dimensions (Sureness, Reliability, Agility, Peacefulness), and Samsung brand personality has three dimensions (Competence, Sophistication, Agility).

Compared with Jennifer Aaker's five factor scales, the "Ruggedness" dimension is not present in current research results, which is consistent with the implication of many studies (e.g., Jennifer Aaker et al., 2001; Sung and Tinkham, 2005; Shengbin & Taihong,

2003) that Ruggedness is culture-specific factor of United States in comparison with eastern country. Agility, the common dimension of Nokia and Samsung brand personality, didn't appear in other country's personality dimensions, which suggests it may be a unique dimension in Chinese situation and the Chinese consumers attach importance to the characteristic according to the high sales of Nokia and Samsung.

The Sureness, Reliability, Peacefulness are the specific dimensions of Nokia, and the characteristics meet the key management idea of people-oriented for the Nokia company. The characteristics imply Nokia makes progress in a down-to-earth way and give the consumer the reliable feeling. Competence, especially Sophistication, the specific dimensions of Samsung, embody the ideal of dignity, elegance, fashion quality of Samsung. The beautiful, exquisite appearance of the Samsung mobile phones and its wide variety may make people feel sophistication is one of its characteristics. And the Samsung mobile phones are usually black and of fine quality, which may make people think Samsung is competent.

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